

AUG 14 1957

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# THE ASSISTANT LIBRARIAN

OFFICIAL JOURNAL OF THE A.A.L.

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# THE ASSISTANT LIBRARIAN

Official Journal of the Association of Assistant Librarians

(Section of the Library Association)

EDITOR: W. G. SMITH.

Westminster Public Libraries, Buckingham Palace Road, London, S.W.1.

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AUGUST, 1957

## Talking Points

**The Net Book Agreement, so far as it affects libraries, should be abolished.** It is a vicious restrictive practice, a supporter of inefficient booksellers, a bar to enterprise on the part of librarians, and a waster of public money on a grand scale. In order for it to continue in force, the booksellers have to justify the agreement before the Restrictive Trade Practices Court, and this would seem to be an appropriate time for the Library Association to give evidence that the Net Book Agreement, so far as public libraries are concerned, is not in the public interest.

Public libraries spend over 3 million pounds on books each year. We do not know what proportion of this is on new stock, but, if the figure is only two million pounds, then we suggest that about £20,000 a year is being wasted by the effects of the Net Book Agreement. If it were not for that, libraries would be able to strike their own bargains with booksellers and obtain a discount of 20 per cent. instead of 10 per cent. at present.

Efficient booksellers are willing to give a 20 per cent. discount and many of them, unofficially do. In one shop recently we found a consignment addressed to a library of books for which not only was the discount 20 per cent., but also the books had been accessioned, stamped and labelled! We know booksellers who not only are able to provide an efficient service on such terms, but are obviously prospering on it.

The usual reason advanced for the retention of the agreement is that it protects the small bookseller, but it is a striking fact that it is usually the small booksellers who offer better terms. They claim, in fact, that the agreement is merely a device which allows the big bookseller to maintain high profits. Why should not librarians be free to make the best terms they can with the booksellers? Are we so well off that we could not use the money we would save by getting a bigger discount?

With non-public libraries, this matter is also of great importance since many of them get no discount at all from the published price of their books. Many booksellers, in return for regular orders, would be willing to give a discount, but are prohibited from doing so by the Net Book Agreement.

Whether the retail price of books to the public in general should be controlled by a restrictive practice is a matter for the publishers, the booksellers, and the book-buying public, but this need have nothing to do with the libraries. It is up to the Library Association to take action.

**Mr. O'Leary**, true to his recent vehement denial of his decease, has produced at Dagenham *One Thousand Books for Boys and Girls* (Price 6d. or, by post, 1s.). The foreword has a note to parents worth quoting, "Children grow, their feet get larger and they eat more. This you can see. Their development *within* is not so easily measured. Part

of it is the awakening of the imagination. This selection of books has that in mind."

**The First Professional Examination** was never a good idea and it is good news that it is to be abolished when the new 2-stage syllabus comes into effect. But what of the meantime? Are students seriously to continue to study this nebulous syllabus and tutors to continue the impossible task of teaching it? The L.A. should make an immediate declaration that no more papers will be set and, pending the introduction of the new syllabus, should allow students to proceed direct to the Registration Examination. The F.P.E. has been of no use to them in the past, is of no use to them at present, and will be no use in the future, so why waste everybody's time by continuing it?

If it is to be continued, we hope that tutors will bring a little more reason to their teaching of classification. Too many are continuing in the old Entrance Examination style to go through all the business of trees of Porphyry, characteristics, differences, and all the other abstract theory which is *definitely not required by the present syllabus*. A glance at the questions set so far will show that this is correct.

**Often lacking in libraries** is a good channel of communication from Chief Librarians and Heads of Departments to the junior staff. No-one tells them of the policies being pursued in the libraries and no-one tells them of the important books that are being added to stock. A praiseworthy attempt to overcome this is occurring in Manchester Public Libraries with a special staff news-sheet, *Information*. It primarily serves the need of the reference library staff, but must be extremely useful also in other departments and branches. The first section offers in each issue some information about some of the reference services (e.g. the special indexes maintained which may not be known to all staff), the second deals with important new acquisitions, and the third notes new items on librarianship. It is interesting that this last feature includes not only books, but also articles in periodicals not devoted exclusively to librarianship (e.g. the article *Keeping up to Date* by Dr. Urquhart in *Technology* for March, 1957).

**We are proud** to print in this issue the Presidential Address of Miss Willson. It is no adverse reflection on the others to say that this was a superb speech, shining with the honesty and sincerity which characterises all she does. Her references to the L.A. Council make us hope that she will agree to stand as a candidate in her own right for that body in this year's elections. She would certainly command your editor's vote.

W.G.S.

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# Go Unashamed . . .

## THE PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS TO THE A.A.L. OF

MISS E. J. WILLSON

If I am to speak of the thing which I regard as of first importance, my subject chooses itself. It is that we are one profession, whether we work in public libraries, university libraries or special libraries, whether we are one of a staff of hundreds or ourselves are the sole staff. There are many varieties of library, but those of us who work in them are librarians, or assistant librarians. We share a common core of knowledge and a common faith in the importance of the written word. We are one profession and we need to apply to ourselves in particular John Donne's, "no man is an island entire of itself, every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main." All librarians are, I suggest, pieces of the continent of librarianship, not islands, or empires, on their own.

We are, of course, only a small profession, some twelve thousand members which, if put end to end, each thousand represented by a dot or dealt with by any of those conjuring tricks of which statisticians are so fond, would make a most unimpressive appearance. We know that size is no measure of value, but to-day the dahlia must be as big as the showwoman's mop, and the largest marrow in the show wins the prize (no one cares if it tastes like wood). This is the age of the big, of the record, of the superlative. Small voices, especially small wrangling voices, are apt to be ignored, and if librarianship as a profession is to be heard it must be able to speak clearly and with one voice.

With whose voice? The answer is that of the Council of the Library Association. For three years I was London Branch Councillor and now I have the honour to represent you on the Council and I have learnt enough of what is done to resent the easy laugh which anyone may raise at a professional meeting by saying something rude about the Library Association Council. I resent it because the L.A. Council is our Council and we elect it; if the wrong people sit on it, it is our fault for not nominating the right ones and using our votes to get them elected. As a member of the Council I don't claim it is perfect, but it is a good deal better than those who criticise it think. Its worst failure is a mania for secrecy—not only must members at large be kept in the dark, but if Council members can be kept unaware of what is going on in committees on which they do not sit, so much the better! Fortunately there are signs of a recovery from this disease; the rash of "confidential" on papers which are circulated becomes less and if the editors of *Liaison* sat in on every committee, we might hope for a complete recovery. If you think the Council is composed of the "old men of the profession," you are out-of-date. The overwhelming majority of members are elected and they come from all types of library.

Talking of a united profession makes me wish that we could have more loyalty from some of its members. Not so much loyalty as would cramp them in the proper expression of considered opinions, but just enough to make them hesitate before spilling into the columns of journals devoted to the interests of other professions unrepresentative, half-baked nonsense. If they must express themselves in print I am sure the editor of the *Assistant Librarian* will give them space, and space for those who would reply.

It occurs to me that some may find it strange to hear a President of the Association of Assistant Librarians speaking as I have of the Library Association Council. If this is so then it is a measure of how far we have to go before we can have one united profession.

Some may think that the voice of the profession should not be that of the Council it elects, but of the Annual General Meeting. If anyone here is innocent enough to think that, then he has never attended an Annual General Meeting and seen the mixture of childishness, parish pump politics and downright rudeness there displayed. Indeed if this is what we get when those "united in their interest in libraries" meet, let us have something else! As it is at the present time, the Annual General Meeting cannot express professional opinion, and I say frankly (this is a personal expression of opinion and not necessarily that of the A.A.L.) that **authority and institutional members should have no place in the running of our Association** and if we were not afraid that we might lose their help when we needed it, and reluctant to part with their subscriptions, we should long before now have amended our bye-laws with, I believe, the sympathetic understanding of the majority of authorities. It is not only the authority members, however, who make our Annual General Meetings unrepresentative, equally so, I hope, are those who make cheap personal remarks and stamp down unwelcome speakers.

### THE DUST-BOWL PROFESSION

Sometimes the library profession seems to me to resemble one of those arid waste areas which selfish exploitation has made of once fertile lands in many parts of the world. (The "dust bowl" profession as a change from the "Cinderella.") The hard unyielding earth, the drifting sands, the cracks in the surface, the storms of dust, all seem familiar. We, too, have suffered from erosion, and to say that much of our professional activity is arid is to flatter it. We can take what comfort we may from the fact that it is not "selfish exploitation" which has brought us to our present state, but rather a preoccupation with small details and a lack of vision.

The vision with which we must begin is of a united profession, one which is a federation of interests not a dominating majority giving sops to minorities. I am a public librarian who has never worked—except as a user—in any other type of library, nor am I likely to, but it seems to me that many of the developments in our profession must come from the fields of special librarianship. The split between public and special libraries (to use the usual glib division) will become less as more specialists are added to the staffs of general libraries unless we in public libraries, who are at present in the majority, ignore the specialists' claims to equality.

As you know, the Library Association has had a Reorganization Committee sitting for some time, and in the April *Record* it made a preliminary move. We are to consider alternatives and I hope that the complexity of the task will not prevent us from making some necessary changes. Unlike the British constitution, the constitution of the Library Association is a written one and can be changed if we wish it. I look forward to an organization by interests with local divisions or groups, an organization which is able to cater for all interests (even those of municipal librarians) and which will find a place for some of those groups which now function independently. Why should state librarians, local archivists, music librarians, school librarians and the rest not find a

place? (Let me say again that these are my own views, not those of the A.A.L. Council). An organization by sections recognises a perfectly natural division of interests which exists, and the A.A.L. is a living example of the advantages of becoming a section of the Library Association.

There may be times when we, in the A.A.L., look back nostalgically to the past, to 1929, when we were independent. We had just over a thousand members, the Library Association had 1,272, including institutional members. We are not likely to forget—nor allow others to forget—that we gave up our independence for the good of the profession as a whole. Why this very room where we are meeting to-night might still be resounding to the neighing of horses instead of to your President if we had not enabled the Library Association to fulfil its pledge to the Carnegie Trust and so earn its grant! Will anyone deny the gain to us all which has resulted?

Looking back into the past, you know, the "Bliss 'twas in that dawn to be alive." "There were giants in the earth in those days" is a privilege of the old, but we are a young profession and should look forward.

The first stage then of bringing the "dust bowl" to fertility is a reorganization of the structure of the Library Association to give all types of librarians an equal place. We in public libraries might remember that in the early days of the L.A. many of our leaders came from special libraries: indeed they were our founders. We all need to make some adjustments in viewpoint and learn more about each other. It is easy enough for special librarians (many of whom are public library trained) to have a mental picture of an average public library, but who can find a snug generalization to fit non-public libraries into their place? In this it may be they are fortunate. Dr. Hoskings says, "Averages conceal the truth, it is the variations that reveal it," but special librarians could do more to enable us in public libraries to understand their problems. There is a lack of books on the subject and a tendency in some quarters to use strange words like "documentation," and which, when you examine them, turn out to conceal old friends.

Firstly then, **I want a reorganized profession in which all can play their proper parts.** Perhaps I should add that I see no reason for any but the most minor alterations in the structure of the A.A.L. in such a reorganization. It would remain, as now, a training ground for the younger assistant. Those who have tried in the past to engulf, overwhelm, outlaw, ignore or otherwise dispose of the A.A.L. have not found it easy. Perhaps this is because so many of the leaders of the profession are trained in the A.A.L. and no man cares to be seen kicking down the ladder up which he climbed or denying to his successors advantages which he himself enjoyed.

A reorganized profession, however, is not an end but a means. Most of us who choose library work as a career do so because we love books. I know that this is an unfortunate thing to say, and one which is likely to damn any young candidate up for his first interview, but if we did not care for books, what else could we come for? It is hardly likely to be the salaries or the prospects and young people do not usually choose a career because it is respectable and there is a pension after forty years. I do not think that young people are likely to be attracted by the social functions of a public library if, indeed, they know they exist. I am well aware, of course, that many people who make satisfactory librarians drift into the profession for no particular reason and that many others who are

with us are the misfits and rejects of other professions. I repeat that I believe that the majority of us come into librarianship because we want to work among books. After a while with the daily "getting and spending," we tend to lose sight of the importance of books and forget that not only did they have the power to choose our life's work for us, but they have enormous influence on the lives of those who use our services. Library work is made up of thousands of unique transactions of which we rarely see the result. Only occasionally do we recall Karl Marx reading in the British Museum or read in the newspaper that "the defendant said he learnt how to distil whisky from a book he borrowed from his public library" and realise that books play an active part in the lives of many people. We cannot measure the value of the work we do. Issue statistics do not help us much because one issue plus one issue does not really make two, any more than one elephant and one piece of string make two of anything worth counting as such. We public librarians are not, of course, so immune from the spirit of the age as to be able to ignore record issues, especially when they are something easily understood

If we stop to think about it we know that the work we do is of great value to the individual and to the community. Libraries alone stand for freedom of choice in a world blinded and deafened by television, films and radio, where every hoarding and newspaper pounds its message into us. The difficulty is that all that can be said on the importance of books and libraries tends to sound pretentious or slip off the tongue in platitudes and out of the mind as easily. I am no Milton able to mint something fresh for you, but I have been looking at some of those advertisements and offer you "*Books in, ignorance out,*" "*Libraries are good for you,*" "*Books please,*" "*If you want to get ahead get a book,*" "*Books add brightness,*" *There is no substitute for books.*" Now that last one says something we sometimes seem in danger of forgetting. A library is not made by punched cards or photo-chargers, wall-paper

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on the walls or elegant gadgets: there is no substitute for books. In saying this I have not forgotten the existence of micro-texts, of tape recordings, the Bush Rapid Selector and the rest, but you know a tape recording of Shakespeare reading his own plays would be a most unsatisfactory substitute for the written text; we should probably dislike his accent. But when we take up a volume of the plays we can read them in our own way, at our own pace, and get out of them as much as we are prepared to put in; after seeing a good production in the theatre, the first thing we do is turn back to the written text. The vogue for "the book of the film" is an expression of the same need. The written word possesses a very powerful magic not shared by audio-visual aids.

There is no substitute for books, and it is hardly necessary to remind you that a collection of books needs to be organized in libraries to be truly effective.

**I think it is time we did a little more tub-thumping about the importance of our work.** This is no time for us to be modest or we shall find that people conclude that (as was said of a certain statesman) it is because we have "so much to be modest about." This is the time for us, as one united profession, to shout out loud what books organized in libraries can do and what the national library service means. We dare not wait until all public libraries are worth shouting about because if we do we shall all be dead and buried before anything is achieved. We ought to make the required standards of provision clear and say what, given that provision, libraries can do.

We spend more than £500 million a year on formal education and the Minister tells us this is not enough. On public libraries we spend £15 million. I do not think anyone knows the total expenditure on all kinds of library, but if we say £30 million, how inadequate this is against £500 million! Yet libraries of all kinds are available to every one, according to his needs, from the time he can read to the day of his death and the school which does not teach its pupils how to read and make use of books has failed in one of its main tasks. There is no public library in the country which is adequately financed; from the greatest of them all, the British Museum, which must close at 5 p.m. because, it seems, we cannot afford to keep it open longer, to Steeple Claydon, one of the smallest places with an independent library service, which spends £12 a year on books. Many special libraries, in particular those of societies and institutions are in no better case. One special library of which I am a user, which possesses a unique collection on its subject, is so inadequately housed that if it had three users at once it would be overfull. Its librarian is not on the register of the Library Association. I have heard, too, of libraries in industrial firms ill-equipped and with ill-paid, unqualified staff. We must convince those who pay for our libraries that the most expensive ones are those run on the cheap.

We are in a difficulty. We want more money so we can give a better library service, but how can we show what a good library is without sufficient money? We are bound up by this seemingly endless chain of poor libraries, lack of appreciation of what a good library can do, inadequate public support, poor librarians and so on. How can we break out of it? We have some hope in that many libraries do give a better service than the public support of them would seem to deserve, and this provides us with a part of the answer. It is up to us to prove what we can do with the resources we are given. We can start at the beginning

with the assistant at the lending or reference counter. If that assistant lolls on the counter reading a periodical, if the arrival of a reader "interrupts" his conversation with a colleague, if he is inattentive, slovenly or rude, then support for the library is lost. It has been said that the librarian should be host in his library, it is also as well for him to remember that his guests are paying guests. If the atmosphere of the library is alert and friendly, if not only is good care taken of the books and publicly owned equipment in it, but that care is seen to be taken, then the library makes friends all the time. In itself this is not enough to gain the extra public support we need, but without it the task of the Chief Librarian and his Heads of Departments becomes impossible. Every Councillor prefers to believe what he has seen with his own eyes, or what his wife's cousin said she saw, rather than to take the word of the officer in charge who has an axe to grind.

## A PROPAGANDA FUND

Obviously this improvement in public relations is a slow process and needs to be speeded up. I do not think we can look for immediate help from outside, from governments, local or national, or from public trusts. We must do the job ourselves, as a profession, as well as an individuals in our libraries. The A.A.L. has made some attempts with its two films and a pamphlet on public relations, and it is now to produce film strips. More resources are required to do a professional job on public relations. That is why I began to talk of you not about the need to show what libraries can, and should do, but about welding our profession truly into one and supporting the body we elect to represent us. We cannot afford to waste our resources and our time bickering with each other. The Library Association must take an active part in propaganda for libraries. Let it test the feeling of the profession by starting a fund to pay for propaganda; I'll gladly contribute to it and so will the majority if it will lead to a serious consideration of the pressing need to make the case for libraries heard.

To sum up for the benefit of anyone who has dozed off. **I want a reorganized profession which can speak for us all through its elected council; I want us to be unashamed of the importance of our work, and I want us actively to carry on propaganda for libraries so that everyone shall be aware of what they stand for, of what they have to offer and their value to the individual and the community in terms of "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness."**

\* \* \* \*

## A.A.L. CORRESPONDENCE COURSES

### REVISION COURSES, SEPTEMBER—DECEMBER, 1957

A limited number of *Registration* and *Final* courses will be available to run from September to December. These short period courses are reserved exclusively for those students who have already sat the examination in the subjects required.

The closing date for application is *25th August*, but forms for *Final* revision courses will be accepted up to one week after the summer examinations results. After this date no application will be considered.

### FULL LENGTH COURSES.

Applications for *F.P.E.*, *Registration*, and *Final* courses beginning November, 1957, must be completed and returned by *30th September*. Full particulars of the courses offered are given in the current edition of the *Students' Handbook* (L.A. 4s. post free).

### FORMS, FEES AND ENQUIRIES.

Forms may be obtained from the A.A.L. Hon. Education and Sales Officer, Mr. J. S. Davey, F.L.A., 49, Halstead Gardens, London, N.21, who will be pleased to answer any enquiries concerning the courses. Stamped addressed envelopes for replies would be appreciated. The fee for each course is £2 10s. plus 10s. extra to students in Africa, America, Asia and Australia.

## Parsifal of the Pulps

By D. E. Gerard, Deputy Librarian, Nottingham.

Raymond Chandler, it is said, is to start writing again, something like three years after the appearance of his last novel. The news will delight those of us who have caught the tang of his refreshing cynicism and the astringent flavour of his prose; for no one need lower his voice in a crowded room to confess a liking for Chandler. I have been moved to try a little practical vivisection on this author in the hope that some of the still untutored might perceive the pleasures that await them in the cold blue light of his world of calculated fantasy.

A modest start would best be made in the pages of the collection of his earliest contributions to the pulp magazines, his primary output, recently published together with a long analytical essay entitled *The Simple Art of Murder*, which gives the book its title. The essay dominates the book and demonstrates ruthlessly the architectural falsity of most current detective fiction, crisply outlining his own operational modes. These short stories are embryonic Chandler, the crudities yet to be softened into the refinements of the novels still in the future; this is Chandler still on the way up, still in the shadow of Dashiell Hammett, whose mantle, one writer said, fell upon him and was dyed a deeper shade of crimson. *The Simple Art of Murder* is his literary testament, and in writing it he registers his condemnation of the conventional pattern of the detective story: "There is nothing new about such stories and nothing old; they have learned nothing and forgotten nothing. The story you will find any week in the big, shiny magazines, paying due deference to virginal love and the right brand of luxury goods." The essay tells us that Chandler rejects the footprint-in-the-shrubbery school, demolishes its artifice and pretensions, and has little time for the lath and paper country house where the murderer kills for no other reason than to provide a corpse. He reduces to its unmeaning absurdity the average Agatha Christie fairy tale, the Ellery Queen pantomimes, the Sunday puzzles of John Rhode, takes as his specimen for analysis A. A. Milne's *Red House Mystery*, and shows why it is a mere house of cards. His main thesis is that murder takes place for a number of squalid reasons, and some environments are more likely to produce murderers and motives than others. It is with these neurotics and decadents, created and conditioned by the pressures of life in Gaudiland (any modern American city) that this author deals, remorselessly and penetratingly. "Murder," he argues, "is a frustration of the individual and hence a frustration of the race, and has in fact a good deal of sociological implication."

Chandler's backdrop, described with such loving, minute fidelity, that it sounds like an estate agent's brochure, is the Byzantine chateau on Sunset Boulevard, the neon-flushed street at night, and the muted excitement of the bars that minister to the lusts of the well-nourished citizens. For Chandler, the matrix of murder is the womb wherein the seven deadly sins develop and flourish. His universe is made out of this mould, in the image of greed, fear and debased sex, and is peopled with characters appropriate to it, the denizens of the asphalt jungle, engaging in activities this side frenzy. The material which keeps Americans awake over their breakfast paper is his fodder, and it comes straight from the heart of self-regarding real life. All he needed to do was to give it shape and formulate it as a story. The peculiar achievement of his art



has been his skilled transformation of the conventional blood-and-guts thriller into something approaching a social tract, cleverly retaining the pace of the former and the impact of the latter. This he has done by using a device perfected by Dashiell Hammett—the device of the perpetual hero—in this case a Parsifal whose chief weapon is courage and a certain old-fashioned regard for truth. His name is Philip Marlowe and he exists by virtue of a licence granted by the Police Department to operate as a private detective. Despite an unflagging addiction to whisky, he is in good shape, expert in the tools of his trade and possessed of an unending curiosity and a lethal poise. "He must be," says Chandler, "a complete man, a common man, and yet an unusual man. He must be, to use a weathered phrase, a man of honour by instinct, by inevitability, without thought of it. I do not care much about his private life: he is neither eunuch nor satyr. He is a relatively poor man; he has a sense of character or he would not know his job. He talks as a man of his era talks, that is with wit, a lively sense of the grotesque, a disgust for sham, and a contempt for pettiness. He has a range of awareness that startles you, but it belongs to him by right. If there were enough like him in the world, it would be a safe place to live in, yet not too dull."

Through a world sweet with the breath of corruption, then, Philip Marlowe moves like a cool stream of air, a not-so-young knight (he ages book by book and has now reached 38) in search of a commonplace grail, unprompted by sanctity, but sustained by his regard for impartial truth. He is the fulcrum of the action, the very focus of energy. At other times he has been called Beowulf, Sir Gawain, and more recently, Shane. His morality is just as equivocal as that of the last two, but his obsession with fact is unassailable. For his adventuring, Marlowe earns 25 dollars a day and expenses, though the author is careful to tie his income to the cost of living and his latest charges are 40 dollars a day. He is quite prepared to accept a love-token of \$1000 as well, if offered; and he is equally liable to return all his earned money if he is dissatisfied with his methods of solution. In his wry dialogue is summarised a whole way of thinking and feeling, one which belongs to the intelligent American of varied experience, no particular message to deliver, yet obstinate for the answer that yields him, in this case, physical pain, social contempt, and only occasionally a hard-headed, tender-fleshed succulent to share his bed. Marlowe survives because of his self-charging vitality, his lack of illusions, his second thoughts, his refusal to draw any moral, and the fact that he is not easily deflected from the immediacies of the problem between him and his next whisky sour. To the satanic finesse of the city politician, the obscene degradation of the drug addict, or the single-minded ambition of the screen actress, who constitute his intimates and enemies, he opposes a brutal honesty and a certain cultivation ("I can speak reasonably grammatical English when required"). Marlowe is human, makes mistakes, retracts, revises, loses his self-confidence, but never his objectives. His code suffers from the blows of outside agencies, but he is stubbornly proof against corruption. His shabby office is the cave of the Sybil. In the threadbare chair a whole tribe of clients have leaned back, tensed forward, sprawled, drawled and hissed their stories at him. From the other side of his (quite empty) desk he has in turn eyed them, weighed them, classified them and accepted them—at his own valuation. The empty desk symptomises the essential simplicity of Marlowe: his business efficiency is below par, his organisation irreducibly single. For equipment he needs only two items, brains—externalised in a chess set



he keeps, and brawn, assisted by a modest armoury. It is from the office that he begins his journeys in search of a distant solution at the far end of a maze of lies, animal fear, and menace. Whisky bottle and chess set would make admirable emblems on his scutcheon, and the novel *The High Window* concluded with a nice blending of the two when Marlowe raises his whisky glass to his reflection in the mirror after playing over fifty moves from a game of Capablanca's "beautiful, cool, remorseless chess," the kill made, his objective reached. His only recorded self-praise makes the last line of the book—"You and Capablanca," I said.'

Such is the central creation of Raymond Chandler. To the new arrival in Bay City the world of Philip Marlowe will be a revelation, though so great has been the force of Chandler's influence during the past 17 years that it will not be as strange as it might have been. The new-comer will meet figures from a world of apparent dream, but let him be disillusioned of that immediately. In cold fact these men and women form the structure of too many cities in the world to-day, especially American cities. Here you will meet Moses Maglashen, corrupt cop and with every reason to seek corruption; Mavis Weld, an ambiguous woman who typifies the ruthlessness of the story behind Hollywood success; Sherry Ballou, another aspect of gilded decadence; Moose Malloy, one of the race of grafters and hoods; Lash Canino, who symbolises cruelty; plus a chorus of bit players, all highly photogenic. It is not a fragrant world, but has the vitality of the world we live in, and a writer with toughness of mind can make interesting and significant patterns out of it. And this is exactly what Chandler does, to perfection.

To finish, it might be pertinent to add that the diffuseness of the plots need never obscure the felicities of their expression. Enjoy the whole, savour the dish; the list of Chandler's works is not long, and all of it is essential reading. You will undoubtedly be left with a sense of dissatisfaction, wondering what the next work will be, vaguely desiring something more substantial. But these tracts for the times neither condone nor condemn; their interest is in their texture and their fluent wisdom, smooth as the bar counter on which it was generated. What more do we want? Let Chandler have the last word: "But all this is for me not quite enough. It is not funny that a man should be killed, but it is funny that his death should be the coin of what we call civilisation. All this is still not quite enough. In everything that can be called art there is a quality of redemption; it may be pure tragedy, it may be the raucous laughter of the strong man. But down these mean streets a man must go who is not himself mean, who is neither tarnished nor afraid. The detective in this kind of story must be such a man. He is a hero. He is everything." And that is the crux of the matter. In the modish suit and the athletic figure of Philip Marlowe is summarised everything of significance that Raymond Chandler has ever had to communicate, or is ever likely to. Why ask for anything more?

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## THE SUBJECT DEPARTMENT AND THE ASSISTANT

*by Miss E. K. Wilson, Liverpool Public Libraries*

Some may be expecting me to approach this aspect of librarianship in a controversial manner. Such, however, is not my intention. I wish to show how the large city library with several subject departments is organised to cope with the miscellaneous material which comes its way. I am not able to tell you of any special training which will equip the assistant for entry to the subject department, for as yet recruitment to the staff of the subject department is from the general pool of assistants in the library. It is extremely useful, however, if the assistant, as part of his training has spent some time in the Reference Library.

A decision must be reached as to what qualifications and experience are desired. Professional knowledge acquired by a study of library subjects gives one mastery of the technique of the job; subject knowledge, whether accompanied by professional qualification or not, enables one to evaluate the materials one deals with and put them to work to the best advantage. Both have their value. Each one of us gives back to his work much of what he has been taught, and each assistant has a different concept of the duties involved. An assistant without knowledge of the best bibliographies in his subject field could not deal adequately with the book selection in the department. If we are to improve our service to readers, each class of books in our larger libraries must be looked after by a specialist in its bibliography. Similarly an assistant without practical experience in cataloguing and classification could not be expected to classify and catalogue in the subject department. It is desirable that the subject department should function as a unit. The staff, whether subject specialists or librarians, can carry out an efficient service most satisfactorily if responsible for the complete routine of book buying, cataloguing and classification. They are concerned with only a limited field and can adhere to a uniform pattern in applying class marks and allotting subject entries.

When we think of the subject department we must not think of it only as a library of books. Some subject departments contain such miscellaneous items as manuscripts, pamphlets, annual reports, maps and plans, prints and other pictorial material, newspaper cuttings, lantern slides, negatives, microfilms, broadsides and playbills.

Pamphlets should be fully classified and catalogued as individual items. They stand on the shelves in the classification sequence with books on the same, or closely allied subjects. Annual reports of societies and minutes of Council and Committee meetings are best kept loose in individual boxes designed to stand on the shelves in the classification sequence. The reports of societies can be kept in this way until there is a sufficient number for binding into a volume, and Council and Committee minutes can be retained until an annual volume is forthcoming.

Maps can be treated in several ways. At Cambridge University Library maps are stored flat in shallow steel trays about one inch deep, which slide into high steel cupboards. The doors swing open and are fitted with runners which hold the heavy trays as they are pulled out. The plan file made by the Art Metal Construction Company consists of a large steel cabinet, which has inside fifteen main pockets into each of which it is possible to place four heavy manilla folders. Each pocket is compressed by nine springs and moves backwards and forwards on ball

bearings. Early maps and other maps of particular value may receive special treatment, each being provided with a portfolio.

The Print and Illustrations collection are common to many subject departments. The term print collection is a comprehensive one which covers several forms of pictorial representation. It includes pencil drawings, water colours, aquatints, mezzotints, lithographs, and engravings, among other forms. Prints are protected by cut mounts, hinged to a backing cardboard on which the print itself is hinged and not laid down. The reverse side of the mount should bear the name of the artist and engraver, the subject of the study, the date of the representation and the class and accession numbers. To avoid unnecessary handling of prints, photographic copies should be made of the more important original pencil drawings and water colours. Prints are most conveniently divided into sizes decided upon as being the most suitable, such as 12in. by 9in., 15in. by 12in., and so on. Such size groups depend on the number and variety of prints.

The building up of the Illustrations Collection need not be a costly enterprise, and a large and representative collection can be established for little more than the time involved and the cost of mounting the material. The perusal of illustrated periodicals, old books, advertising matter, and printed material of all kinds must be systematically undertaken and all suitable material extracted. The durability of individual illustrations, which are available for borrowing and may be subjected to a considerable amount of wear and tear, will depend on the material used for mounts. A high quality linen-faced manilla is most suitable. Stout portfolios, capable of holding two dozen mounted illustrations, should be provided for protecting illustrations on loan. A reference illustrations collection should be small and should be restricted to those illustrations which are large, and to expensive reproductions. The provision of different sizes of portfolios to accommodate material of varying sizes should be considered as well as the practicability of using larger vertical files for the smaller sizes. I would recommend a classified sequence with a separate index. In no subject department is the illustrations collection more valuable and indispensable than the Fine Art Library. Attention should be directed to the collection of good reproductions of works of art and illustrations of objects of art.

In the Local History Department, as in other subject departments, but to a greater extent, the newspaper cuttings collection supplements the information found in books. Items of local interest should be taken from the local papers and the leading national papers daily. Such a collection should include not only topographical and biographical cuttings, but also cuttings on such subjects as housing, education and municipal affairs. Every important aspect of life in the community should be represented. The simplest method of mounting cuttings is to paste each on a sheet 12in. by 9in. with a  $\frac{1}{2}$ in. guard. The subject of the cutting may be written on the  $\frac{1}{2}$ in. guard or on the top right hand corner of the sheet along with the class mark. When another cutting appears on the same subject it can be affixed to the first sheet. Individual cuttings may be arranged in classified order in a series of boxes. When sufficient cuttings appear on a particular subject they may be bound together into a volume and an index prepared to the contents of the volume. This volume may also include plans and photographs and be treated as an individual book.

In the Commercial Library many librarians maintain a clippings file by means of which the librarian can produce for a reader a folder of current information collected from many sources. In the *Times* and its

supplements appears a mass of commercial and some technical material renowned for its accuracy. When a volume of the *Times Index* appears the *Times* itself supersedes the file. Each clipping must be classed under the narrowest subject heading if the file is to be of the greatest service.

Lantern slides come next for consideration. Slides may be obtained in the usual size of approximately 3in., but the size now being adopted is 35mm. Consideration will have to be given to keeping them in one or two size sequences. They may be stored in specially designed drawers the width of the normal lantern slide box, or stored in a uniform set of the boxes themselves. It is more convenient if the boxes do not have divisions because the slides can then be moved or arranged within a box without undue difficulty. Each slide should be placed in a manilla folder the size of the slides, with a projecting tab. This tab projects about one quarter of an inch above and behind the slide. Inside the tiny folder is typed a description of the slide and on the projecting edge the class mark and the accession number. The manilla folder serves not only as a protection of the slide, but also the same purpose as a book card.

Negatives of photographs in the collection and negatives which may have been acquired separately may be dealt with in a similar fashion. These are in sizes, usually half plate, 6½in. by 4½in., and whole plate, 8½in. by 6½in. They may be stored in vertical folders also, or in transparent envelopes which bear at the top the class number, the accession number and the description. Micro-films may be on reels or strips. Micro prints are best kept in envelopes in a special file. They may be stored with advantage in metal containers in a cabinet in class sequence. Cinema films may be preserved in a series of sealed tin boxes commercially made for them, and stored in a fire proof vault.

Theatre programmes may be bound in volumes if sets are complete. Entries for theatre programmes and playbills should be under the name of the institution in the main catalogue. A calendar of broadsides is necessary. Entry under the subject and title would be the only entry in

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most cases. Entry should be under the name of the author when known. It is important that the name of the printer or bookseller should be given, and the date whenever possible.

It is assumed that the collection will have copies of all books in the library service on the subject, but it does not preclude copies being held by the branch libraries. It is important that when only one lending copy is held it should be in the subject department. Lending copies stand side by side on the shelves with reference copies. They may be distinguished by a different label and a distinguishing mark may be added to the class mark of reference copies.

It is desirable and essential that the classification scheme in use in the general libraries should be used in the subject department. Mr. Lamb in his *Technical and Commercial Libraries* writes "from this point of view a general scheme such as Dewey is adequate. There will of course be a few subjects, usually connected with the basic trade of the town in which closer classification is desirable. It is quite possible to apply a local expansion to them without creating a notation which may run to an absurd length." Again, to quote Dr. Savage, "the trained librarian has been taught to apply it in general libraries. He may however be called upon to prepare schedules for a special library, or to extend a published scheme, and most assuredly he will be compelled to apply a far greater number of sub-divisions, than the general practitioner."

This, though without doubt the best procedure, presents problems in the subject department. In adopting the general scheme we come across several inconsistencies. For instance in the Decimal Classification, we have divisions for dramatic and theatre, church and sacred music and so on. Several of each group are either orchestral, vocal or instrumental. In the Universal Decimal Classification preference is given to alphabetical arrangements by composers. It would appear to be the most logical because we ought to group music by the most important thing in it, namely the composer. The same criticism applies to the classification of the Fine Arts. Surely it is important to have the works by or on an artist together, instead of under architecture, sculpture, drawing and painting, whatever mediums have been used.

All the foregoing deal with public service. There is one subject department which should be included in every large library, namely, a staff library. It should be a separate room, cared for by the Reference Library staff, but at the same time a room where reference and lending copies of textbooks and more advanced works on librarianship stand on the shelves in classified order, where long runs of bound library periodicals are available for consultation, and current copies are on the shelves beside them, where analytical entries appear in the catalogue in this room, and where comfortable tables and chairs encourage the staff to sit and read. I should like to see also a system of staff training, whereby those entrants who have been in the profession approximately six months, would be given an opportunity of going as a class to the subject departments in turn, to be given a talk by the librarian in charge, to be told how to use the special catalogues and indexes, and to be set some interesting but manageable queries which would add interest to their visit.

*From a speech given at the A.G.M. of the Liverpool and District Division of the A.A.L.*

\* \* \* \*

#### **PRIMER OF ASSISTANCE TO READERS (2nd ed. 1956, 8s. to members).**

An errata list for this book is now ready and will be issued with copies bought in future. Those who already have the Primer may obtain an errata list by sending a stamped addressed envelope to the Honorary Education and Sales Officer (J. S. Davey, F.L.A.), 49, Halstead Gardens London, N.21.

In order to allow for the Editor's holiday, this issue was prepared earlier than usual and correspondence has had to be held over to next month.

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## "A NICE LITTLE WHIRLWIND"

The 1957 Annual General Meeting of the A.A.L.

The battle between Education and Finance which has been a frequent topic in recent issues of Council Notes, was carried into the Annual General Meeting at Chaucer House on Wednesday, 15th May. Messrs. Howard Phillips and Peter Pocklington were carrying what they interpreted as the Education flag, and were anxious to gain recruits from the 110 members present for a cause which, if the truth be told, was never very clear to many members in the hall.

The first of Mr. Phillips's many short trips from his seat to his feet came towards the end of the Annual Report. The statement therein that the A.A.L. pioneer film *Index to Progress* had not dated, he called "a damnable lie." It is to be regretted that such language should be recorded in these columns, but Mr. Surridge interpreted something in Mr. Phillips' speech as a motion, seconded it, and found enough people energetic enough at this stage to put their hands in the air. The net result is that the Council is asked to re-examine its films' policy.

Encouraged by this minor success, Mr. Phillips went so far as to call the next battle on financial ground, somewhere he has never been known to win. As Mr. Davinson later in the meeting had cause to say: "I have only been to two Council meetings. On each occasion Mr. Phillips has disclaimed all financial knowledge. I have previously take this to be false modesty, but now find it to be quite true." Replies to Mr. Phillips' question about the number of publications on the stocks at December last were given by the Honorary Treasurer and Mr. Godfrey Thompson, the latter in his capacity as "chief scrooge," or Chairman of the Finance Committee.

With democratic firmness, Mr. Tynemouth managed to quell further discussion and have the Annual Report and Accounts approved and adopted. It seemed clear that he wished to pass on to his last duty from the Chair, that of handing over to his successor as President. He introduced Miss Willson as "only our third lady President," and pointed out that one of her predecessors, Miss E. M. Exley, now Borough Librarian of St. Marylebone, was present at the meeting.

The President's first duty at the Annual General Meeting is the not particularly arduous one of calling for nominations for Hon. Auditors for the current year. These came as readily as ever, Messrs. J. N. Harris and J. H. Jones moving that last year's auditors, Messrs. A. E. Brown and W. H. Mabey, be re-elected. Nobody dissented.

We came then, as we had to, to the Pocklington-Phillips' motion, which reminded the Council that education was one of its chief objects, and that education should be subsidised, if necessary, from general funds. Mr. Pocklington opened rather in the manner of Mark Antony with "Madame President, Ladies, Gentlemen and Friends." One wondered about the sex of the latter category. He reminded us of the elfish sprite which had prompted him to conduct scientific experiments upon the window-sill of the Council Chamber at a previous A.G.M., and then tried to mislead all and sundry by informing us that the subject under discussion did not lend itself to jocularly. On and on in jocular vein went Mr. Pocklington until the President waved the gavel and gently asked, "May we have it?"

"I shall never get into full swing again," grumbled Peter P.

"That is the intention," said the President, and one wondered if a male President would have dared be so sweetly partial.



Ten more minutes only and Mr. Pocklington said, "At this stage perhaps I should explain just what this motion means." Well under a quarter-of-an-hour later he was winding up succinctly—"Let's get down to it. Spend some money or education will go down the drain."

Mr. Phillips rose with less sprightliness, and one wasn't sure if Mr. Pocklington or his own frequent bobbing up and down had made him tired. He informed us that he could not second the motion with pleasure because it was an indictment of the Council and of the inflexibility of some of the young-old men who occupied its higher places. As the "Grampappy" of the Council, he was sorry about all sorts of things, but the gist of the remarks was that it was illogical for the A.A.L. on the one-hand to be a "successful publishing house" and on the other to struggle to pay tutors out of the fees paid for correspondence courses. Subsidise and be damned.

Messrs. Paget (Cheltenham) and Westacott (Croydon) expressed the general mystification at what they took to be "inner Council intrigue," and explanatory answers by Messrs. Davey and Thompson, and the Honorary Secretary, apparently did little to clear the air, for Mr. Dudley then informed the meeting that it was his opinion that all this was a clash of personalities, and he could see "the dust in the corridors of power being swept up into a nice little whirlwind."

Mr. Atkinson asked the meeting "not to allow Moon and Tynemouth to jolly it out of court," and Mr. Thompson asked the movers to do the only decent thing and withdraw the motion. Neither of these requests was listened to, and the motion was lost after a recount.

After the Annual General Meeting, Miss Willson gave her Presidential Address. She gave a simple recipe for a Presidential Address—that it should be about something which is important, that it must not bore, and that it must be audible. To say that the cake justified the recipe is to ignore the individual skill of the cook. This was an outstanding address.

E. E. MOON.

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